

Support Article or Under-Article

This invention relates to treatments of venous pathology, more exactly those implementing so-called support or compression articles, and more particularly the field of producing articles derived from genuine support or compression articles as such, especially the production of "under-articles" such as understockings for support articles.

Support articles in the sense of this description are defined as all tubular compressive orthoses made of a knit, elastic textile material, except for bandages, and more especially compressive orthoses of one or two lower limbs. The support "under-articles" for the purposes of this invention are articles (typically socks, stockings, knee socks, tights, and the like) designed to be slipped on first and thus to be in direct contact with the skin of the patient. Such articles are designed first of all to improve the comfort of the wearer's skin, but can equally advantageously exhibit different properties intended, for example, to yield light support or to reinforce the support action of the main article. In any case, the main innovation of the aforementioned articles resides in the fact that they can both be more easily slipped on by the user and can provide increased comfort.

Actually, placing support articles typically of a high class, typically of class 3 (strong compression between 27 and 48 hPa) or of class 4 (extra-strong compression greater than 48 hPa), on the limbs to be treated still today comprises a genuine everyday problem that confronts patients and/or caregivers.

This problem is the more critical in that correct and consistent placement is essential to optimize adherence to the treatment prescribed by the physician and thus its chances of success.

The problems associated with placement are inherent in the enhanced support material or textile material and can even, if necessary, be exacerbated by a diminished physical state of the patient, in particular when the latter must apply said treatment himself.

Numerous types of mechanical devices for slipping on articles are already known, in particular in the form of accessories generally for stockings, that are for the most part heavy metallic structures that are difficult to manipulate. These devices are not satisfactory, however, the residual efforts to be supplied by the patient and the complexity of their use still being too weighty and thus discouraging.

There is thus a real need for a simple and economical article that significantly facilitates the placement of the aforementioned support articles.

There are, moreover, support articles that can be used alone (for light support) or in combination with a support article of a high class in order, moreover, to reinforce already existing properties of the primary support article. However, the act of slipping a standard support article over another still entails major difficulties today.

The object of this invention is to alleviate the aforementioned problems and to provide such articles.

To do this, the object of the invention is a support article or under-article that can be used alone or preferably under a support article while in direct contact with the skin of the wearer, characterized in that it is essentially knit with at least two different mesh structures, i.e.:

- a first structure for a first zone of said article or under-article that extends from the end

intended for the toes to the level of the ankle bones of said wearer, this zone being knitted according to a so-called "floating mesh" pattern in a textile material with an outer surface that is opposite the one in contact with the skin of said wearer and that is smooth,

- a second structure for a second zone of said article or under-article that extends from the aforementioned ankle bones to the other end opposite that intended for said toes, this zone being knitted according to a so-called "woven mesh" pattern, in an adapted elastic textile material with a weave titer of between 240 dtex and 600 dtex in such a way as to afford light compression or support at the level of said second zone.

Such an "under-article" can be an article placed, for example, under a stocking in the strict sense (covering the thigh and the hollow of the knee), under tights (covering the two lower limbs and the abdomen up to the waist, in a single piece), under a single legging (legging provided with a single leg, designed to support one of the lower limbs), or else under a sock (covering the hollow of the knee alone).

The invention will be better understood by way of the following description that relates to preferred embodiments given by way of nonlimiting examples, and explained with reference to the attached schematic drawing in which the sole figure is a standardized representation of the floating mesh used to produce a support article or under-article according to the invention.

According to this invention, the support article or under-article that can be used alone or preferably under a support article by being in direct contact with the skin of the wearer is characterized in that it is essentially knit with at least two different mesh structures, i.e.:

- a first structure for a first zone of said under-article that extends from the end intended for the toes to the level of the ankle bones of said wearer, this zone being knitted according to a so-called "floating mesh" pattern in a textile material with an outer surface that is opposite that in contact with the skin of said wearer and that is smooth,

- a second structure for a second zone of said under-article that extends from the aforementioned ankle bones to the other end opposite that intended for said toes, this zone being knitted according to a so-called "woven mesh" pattern, in an adapted elastic textile material with a weave titer of between 240 dtex and 600 dtex in such a way as to afford light compression or support at the level of said second zone.

As the sole attached figure shows, the so-called "floating mesh" mesh has a particular knit structure that makes it possible to obtain, for example with a flat synthetic filament, a smooth outer surface. The basic pattern defining completely said floating mesh is obtained on four rows of mesh:

- the first row (1) is composed of meshes labelled "X" whose loops are completely formed on all of the columns,

- the second row (2) is composed of meshes whose loops are completely formed on even columns (p) and whose loops are not formed at all on odd columns (i), the unformed loops being symbolized by a "-",

- the third row (3) is again composed of meshes whose loops are completely formed on all of the columns, and

- the fourth row (4) is composed of meshes whose loops are completely formed on odd

columns and whose loops are not formed at all on even columns.

Advantageously, the article or under-article according to this invention is characterized in that the smooth textile material used for the first structure is a synthetic textile material, preferably a flat synthetic filament, untextured and preferably in combination with an elastothane (elastomer fiber with high elasticity marketed especially under the trademark name Lycra).

In this way, it can be ensured that the side that will be in contact with the support article as such will allow facilitated sliding (very low coefficient of friction) and thus greater ease of slipping the latter over said under-article.

Preferably the article or under-article according to the invention is characterized in that the smooth textile material used for the first structure is a polyamide in the form of a filament.

For this reason, all of the polyamides ordinarily used in the field of textiles can be used for the production of the article or under-article according to the invention. By way of indication, a lighter nylon, of the nylon 6.6 type or the like, is preferred for use.

According to another advantageous characteristic, the textile material used for the second structure comprises at most 50% by weight of a natural textile material, such as cotton, linen, or silk.

Thus, it becomes possible to increase the overall comfort of said article or under-article, especially by increasing the ventilation of the foot in this zone and thus reducing the problems associated with perspiration.

Advantageously, the material used for the second structure is a modified synthetic textile

material (for example modified chemically by grafting the desired functional groupings onto the base skeleton of the polymer or copolymer comprising said synthetic textile material) with a physico-chemical property that has been improved relative to the base synthetic textile material, such as improved thermal insulation, water vapor permeability, bactericidal and/or fungicidal action, an odor-suppression effect, etc.

Thus, it becomes possible to impart an additional functionality to the object of this invention and to suggest a product that is more or less customized depending on the wishes of the patient and the recommendations of the treating physician.

According to another advantageous characteristic, the article or under-article according to the invention is also characterized in that it comprises a so-called alternative knitted heel with a flat synthetic filament.

Such a heel, well known in the field of textile manufacture, is preferably knitted with a flat synthetic filament. In particular, it has the advantage of also increasing comfort for the wearer.

Alternatively, and according to another advantageous characteristic, the article or under-article according to the invention is, moreover, characterized in that it comprises a zone of wider cross-section at the level of the ankle. Thus, it relatively economically compensates for the loss of comfort induced by the absence of the alternative heel.

Preferably, the compression or support applied by the article or under-article according to this invention to the wearer at the level of said first zone is less than 13 hPa.

Even weak support is designed above all to facilitate the garment's being slipped on while

ensuring that it is kept adequately in place, and does not have, in contrast to the second zone, as a first function to ensure a therapeutic effect at the level of the foot, even if such an effect can optionally be exploited in certain cases.

Advantageously, the article or under-article according to the invention is also characterized in that the compression or support applied to the wearer at the level of said second zone is between 13 and 30 hPa, preferably between 20 and 30 hPa.

This more moderate compression may be sufficient in less serious pathological cases in which products of higher classes are not necessary.

Of course, this perfectly managed support can be arithmetically added to the support or compression provided by the genuine support article, for example by a support stocking, in particular a support stocking of a clearly higher class.

More specifically, the article or under-article according to this invention is characterized in that it is a stocking or an understocking, tights or undertights, a legging or an underlegging, i.e., an article placed under a legging provided with a single leg intended to support a single lower limb, or a sock or an undersock.

The operation of the under-article according to the invention is very simple and greatly facilitates placement on said under-article of other support products that are much more difficult to slip on by themselves. In fact, it is sufficient to place (slip on) the under-article adapted to the desired effect in the conventional manner. Due to its light support and its specific structure, no special effort is necessary for this purpose, and this operation can be carried out by most patients.

Finally, it is sufficient to normally slip on the support article as such; this is greatly facilitated by the smooth surface of the under-article already in place.

Based on the products and processes according to the invention, the therapeutic application of support products (in particular of a high or very high class) can be done without undue effort, in an exact and reproducible manner in order to minimize the constraints that develop as well as their adverse effects (strenuous efforts to be applied, placement errors, random adherence or non-adherence to the prescribed treatment...) and to guarantee to the patient effective medical treatment according to the prescription of the physician.

The object of this invention is also a process for placement of a support article, characterized in that it consists essentially in placement of an under-article according to the invention on the part of the body to be treated prior to placement of said support article.

In this way, the placement of support articles, especially the placement of those of a high class, is facilitated, and, if necessary, additional functionalities can be provided to the patient.

Of course, the invention is not limited to the described embodiments and to the attached drawing. Modifications remain possible, especially from the standpoint of the composition of the various components or by substitution of technical equivalents, without thereby exceeding the scope of protection of the invention.